

Research Activities Panel

A WORKING GROUP OF THE
CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL

meeting jointly with the

Channel Islands Marine Science Committee

Monday May 12, 2008

9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Meeting minutes for SAC

1. Round table introductions and brief updates

Research/activity updates from John Ugoretz (CFG), Kevin Lafferty (USGS), Fred Piltz (MMS), Jack Engle (MSI), Dave Siegel (UCSB), Carol Blanchette MSI/PISCO Jenn Caselle, MSI/PISCO, and Donna Schroeder (MMS).

2. CINMS announcements by CINMS staff (Dani Lipski, Research Specialist, and Steve Katz, Research Coordinator).

- Budget – we did not receive a budget until March 2008, 5 months into the fiscal year. The budget we did receive was about the same as in previous years. For the research department this left us with about a few thousand dollars, which have already been allocated to research projects.
 - Staff updates: Dr. Steve Katz is the new Research Coordinator and Unit Dive Supervisor.
 - Two contract staff members became permanent federal employees in 2008: Natalie Senyk (Physical Scientist), Dani Lipski (Research Specialist)
- Research Vessel Updates
 - Shearwater is scheduled for a total of about 200 days this year and has had a full schedule since February; Matt Davis, Vessel Operations Coordinator, has replaced Kate Peet on the NOAA Corp billet.
 - New Vessel – we are expecting a new vessel, a 41 foot catamaran designed for day trips and about 12 passengers. First trips probably will occur Fall 2008.
 - Aircraft Updates
 - NOAA Lake Seawolf aircraft has been reassigned and is no longer in Santa Barbara
 - We have been contracting a Partnavia Observer from Aspen Helicopters for SAMSAP flights

3. Ocean Acidification

- Shiva Polefka was unable to attend the meeting to present the draft Ocean Acidification Report by the Conservation Working Group so the group did not discuss this item. Review of the document by the RAP may occur at a later date.
- Steve Katz provided an update on the Sanctuary's Green Seas, Blue Communities project, which was a challenge from Office of National Marine Sanctuaries headquarter to the Sanctuary Advisory Councils around the country to come up with ways to raise awareness about environmental issues.

A few CINMS Advisory Council members worked with Steve to develop a carbon budget for the sanctuary to understand the carbon flow into and out of the sanctuary. This project asks the following questions:

- What are the sources of human inputs of carbon to CINMS?
- What are their magnitudes?
- What are the long term trends?
- Are management practices (such as changing fuel use or limiting activities) effective?
- The project was not funded; however, the group intends to move forward with some preliminary data collection and analysis.

4. Black Abalone Extinction Risk Review

Melissa Neuman, NMFS member to the SAC, presented information on the Draft Status Review Report at the last SAC meeting in March 2008. The SAC had many questions about the extinction risk model and approved a motion for the RAP to provide review and comments of the technical aspects of the report.

Dr. Barb Taylor from Southwest Fisheries Science Center provided an informative presentation on the development of the model (*presentation available on request from CINMS staff*).

The RAP had the following comments:

- The label for the extinction risk assessment – “population modeling” – is misleading. It is not a population model and should be called an “expert assessment of risk” or similar label.
- It is not clear how extinction risk would change if the time horizon changed, from 30 years to 20 years for example.
- This risk assessment is based entirely on estimated probabilities of extinction due to withering syndrome. Given that, it is not clear that the approach taken here is the best practice. As stated, this is a problem in disease ecology, being evaluated by people who may not be experts in this field. There is much new literature that discusses how infectious disease can drive extinctions, and thus there is need for this assessment to be peer reviewed by epidemiologists.
- The wording obscures the fact that the stated extinction risk is based on an average derived from a poll, and not a calculated probability.

Dr. Taylor appreciated the group’s review and suggested that there would be an opportunity for more involved population models in the recovery plan, where they would perhaps be more relevant. She states that the current model, while not perfect, may provide enough information for the proposal to list the species as Endangered.

- Bob Warner will present a summary of RAP comments on this issue to the SAC at the 30 May meeting. If approved, they will then convey those comments to the Black Abalone risk assessment team.

5. Blue Whale Subcommittee

Steve Katz provided an update on the Sanctuary Advisory Council’s Subcommittee on Large Cetaceans and Shipping Draft Emergency Response Plan and the accompanying research plan. (*Presentation available from CINMS staff on request*) The emergency response plan is based on oil spill response plans and designates which agencies and individuals will be involved in different phases. The more ambitious research plan, which would result in an integrated ecosystem assessment and adaptive management, was not funded.

6. Bight '08

Steve Katz provided an update on the planning for this project, a collaborative regional monitoring program that occurs every five years and involves a consortium of 65 local agencies that work together.

There are five program areas for Bight '08

- Coastal ecology

- Water quality

- Rocky subtidal (untrawlable habitat)

- Areas of Special Biological Significance

- Shoreline microbiology

Each program area has 3 or 4 main questions that the study will try to address, and the rocky subtidal data will be integrated into monitoring plans for the upcoming MLPA process in Southern California. CINMS, PISCO, and CINP are participating.

7. California Draft Coastal Assistance Plan

Jenn Caselle presented this agenda item. The draft plan has just been released and is open to public comment. The plan provides funds to coastal communities that have offshore oil and gas operations. The funds are used for a wide variety of activities varying from beach access enhancement to research and this plan proposes how the funds will be used. RAP members will review the plan with special attention paid to research areas. For example, the proposed activities for MPA monitoring are limited to ROV surveys.

8. RAP membership

The group discussed whether and how RAP membership should be updated or changed. RAP will look at the roster and provide their ideas or nominations for new members.